

# LINCOLN LORE

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## THE FAREWELL ADDRESS

On February 11, 1861, Abraham Lincoln bade farewell to the people of Springfield and departed for Washington to assume the duties of the presidency. What he actually said on that occasion has been very much in dispute, and there are many versions of his remarks which have become known as "The Farewell Address."

One of the press dispatches, published the day after the address was delivered, says that "During the speech Mr. Lincoln betrayed much emotion, and the crowd was af-

fectured to tears." The reporter further comments that when Lincoln closed there was loud applause and cries of "We will pray for you!" evidently in answer to his request that they remember him with their prayers.

There are three separate accounts, accepted generally, which may be considered the source of practically all the other versions. Where there are slight differences from these three original copies, they are largely due to typographical errors, omissions, or substitution of words.

### THE HARPER'S WEEKLY VERSION

The day the speech was delivered it was telegraphed by national press correspondents throughout the country for printing the following day. On February 23, 1861, *Harper's Weekly* printed the version which had been used most extensively and which is to be found in most of the eastern papers.

This version accepted by *Harper's Weekly* was used almost exclusively by early biographers of Abraham Lincoln, and it was not until 1887 that there seemed to be a departure from the general form as it appeared in most of the early papers.

Shortly after the assassination of the President in 1865, J. L. Campbell published an illustrative broadside, fourteen by seventeen inches, entitled "President Lincoln's Farewell Address to His Old Neighbors," and he used the version which had appeared in the early press dispatches. This copy of the address is the simplest form in which it is found and the best known of the many reproductions.

**My Friends—No one not in my position can appreciate the sadness I feel at this parting.**

To this people I owe all that I am.

Here I have lived more than a quarter of a century, here my children were born, and here one of them lies buried.

I know not how soon I shall see you all again.

A duty devolves upon me which is, perhaps, greater than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington.

He never would have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied.

I feel that I cannot succeed without the same Divine aid which sustained him; and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support, and I hope you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that Divine assistance, without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain.

Again I bid you all an affectionate farewell.

### THE CENTURY MAGAZINE VERSION

Abraham Lincoln's private secretary, John G. Nicolay, was with the presidential party on the Washington trip and says that the version of the speech which was published for the first time in the *Century Magazine* for December, 1887, is the authentic one. He states that the manuscript was written "immediately after the train started partly by Mr. Lincoln's own hand and partly by that of his private secretary from his dictation."

Mr. Lincoln spoke without notes and his deep emotion must have influenced more or less his selection of words. It is not to be expected that, after the excitement of the moment was past and he had become his natural self again, he would write or dictate verbatim the words used in the short talk, although the general sense and order of the thoughts would be preserved.

This is the same version that was used on the granite slab, which serves as a background for the statue of Lincoln, erected in 1918 in front of the Illinois State House. At that time, evidently, it was considered the most authentic statement of what Lincoln said.

**My friends: No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting.**

To this place and the kindness of these people, I owe everything.

Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man.

Here my children have been born and one is buried.

I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington.

Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed.

With that assistance, I cannot fail.

Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well.

To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

### THE SPRINGFIELD PRESS VERSION

When William Herndon published his book shortly after the Lincoln history by Nicolay and Hay was printed in the *Century Magazine*, he referred to the Nicolay version of the Farewell Address but did not use it.

Herndon favored the speech as reported in the Springfield papers and this is the version which is now apparently accepted by citizens of Springfield as the authentic statement of the address. It is the form used on the interior walls of the remodeled tomb of Lincoln at Springfield and will undoubtedly become the text most often adopted in the future.

**My Friends: One who has never been placed in a like position can not understand my feelings at this hour, nor the oppressive sadness I feel at this parting.**

For more than twenty-five years I have lived among you, and during all that time I have received nothing but kindness at your hands.

Here the most cherished ties of earth were assumed.

Here my children were born, and here one of them lies buried.

To you, my friends, I owe all that I have—all that I am.

All the strange checkered past seems to crowd upon my mind.

To-day I leave you.

I go to assume a task more difficult than that which devolved upon General Washington.

Unless the great God who assisted him shall be with and aid me I can not prevail; but if the same almighty arm that directed and protected him shall guide and support me I shall not fail; I shall succeed.

Let us pray that the God of our fathers may not forsake us now.

To Him I commend you all.

Permit me to ask that with equal sincerity and faith you will all invoke His wisdom and goodness for me.

With these words I must leave you; for how long I know not.

Friends, one and all, I must now wish you an affectionate farewell.